

Shamtul

by Shadode

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Summary: Shadode tells a story about a special friend.

Shamtul

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Warning: Possible SVC(Sex, Violence, Cussing) within. You have been warned. Shane, wherever you are IRL, you're in my heart, man. This one's for you. (Shane RP'ed as Shamtul in Yahoo, and his char is exactly like him IRL * of course, Shane is human :P *) Song: Who Wants To Live Forever, by Queen.(Queen rules! Also look for some Neil Diamond in there too)

**

Shamtul

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~*_There's no time for us. There's no place for us. What is this thing that builds our dreams, yet slips away from us? Who wants to live forever? Who wants to live forever....? There's no chance for us. It's all decided for us. This world has only one sweet moment set aside for us. Who wants to live forever? Who wants to live forever? Who dares to love forever? When love must die! But touch my tears with your lips! Touch my world with your fingertips! And we can have forever. And we can love forever! Forever is our today. Who wants to live forever? Who wants to live forever? Forever is our today! Who waits forever anyway?_ *~

Hi again. Yeah, you know me. I'm Shadode. Not an Andalite anymore though. I'm a nothlit as a Namek. But I got a story to tell. It's about a special friend I once had. A great kid that I called a little brother, even though we weren't even related. This is Shamtul's story.

I was just minding my own business, taking a nap under a tree in Semeir's meadow when I heard this creaking noise. At first I thought it was just an old tree branch. But branches don't creak like metal, do they?

So I sat up and looked around. "The hell? Who's there?"

No answer, just the awkward creaking.

"Who's there?"

< Just meâ€¦> I heard a thoughtspeak voice say.

"Hi 'Me'." I said and grinned as the creaks got closer. I stood up to my full six foot two inch height and peeked around the tree. Right then, a young male Andalite hobbled into view.

He was leaning on metal crutches. All four of his legs were short and spindly. They were half the length of a normal Andalite's legs. All four of his legs were held straight with braces. Sure the knees could bend, but in a jerky fashion like a robot. The kid probably wasn't much older than Semeir.

"Yo. 'Sup?" I asked.

< 'Sup? I don't know.> The kid hobbled to me, moving his crutches first, front legs and then hind legs. It kinda reminded me of a caterpillar, the way he moved. His eyes were lively though, not dull like his body. < My name is Shamtul-Carrath-Gammahedra.>

"Hi Shamtul. My name's Shadode." I said back and shook his hand. "Can I help ya kneel down somewhere?"

< Uhâ€¦how about that tree over there?> Shamtul pointed to the tree where I'd been relaxing.

Since I felt like being nice today, I let him and helped him get his legs in order for kneeling.

"All set?"

< Yes. Thanks.> He said, offering me a smile.

The corners of my mouth twitched and turned upwards. Yeah, people with mouths don't smile with their eyes like Andalites do. It feels odd at first.

Shamtul and I talked for a long time. I found out that he was the son of captain Nerefir, and had a rare disease that humans get too. A disease called Muscular Dystrophy. But his was advancing faster than it would on a human. Much faster.

I sat back against the tree as Shamtul clumsily got up to graze. As he got up, I saw one of the most selfish little brats I've ever known. It was a kid named Jakeeli. I won't even tell his second and third names, because he claims they're names that I don't think are real.

< Hi Ms. Shadode.> Jakeeli kissed up to me.

I just waved, and he rudely stared at Shamtul's awkward walking gait.

"Is there something you need, Jakeeli?" I sneered. _Annoying little shit,_ I added silently.

< No.> He answered.

Semeir trotted into the meadow from the forest. Shamtul took one look at her and almost fell over. Instant crush. Add one more guy to Semeir's list of 'loyal followers.' Heh, heh, heh.

Semeir smiled at Shamtul, completely ignoring his braces. < Greetings.>

< Hi!> Shamtul said, introducing himself afterwards. Semeir introduced herself and smiled, shaking his hand.

Again, I caught Jakeeli staring at Shamtul.

"Hey stare at a wall or something OK? That's rude." I muttered at him. Jakeeli just narrowed his eyes at me and pranced into the meadow to graze. I watched him step overly daintily past Shamtul. That did it! "Hey Jakeeli, leave Shamtul the hell alone will ya?"

< Shut up Shadode.> Jakeeli whined.

I got up and into his face. "Say that again, you little puke. Go on! Say it!"

Jakeeli wet himself, the mess running down his hind legs. He shuddered and ran off screaming like the little wuss he was.

"Tha's what I thought!"

< Shadode, wasn't that rude?> Semeir asked.

"Nah. He's a piss head." I answered.

Shamtul hobbled over. He was laughing. < Finally, a bully that bullies bullies.>

"Shamtul," I began, giving him a noogie, "I think I like you."

Semeir broke into laughter as she headed off into the tent she called her scoop. < I remember my bullies. They wouldn't bother me if the knew me now.>

< Heh.> Shamtul started. < Well if that kid bugs me again, I'll swing with this.> He pushed a button on one of the handles on one of his crutches. A blade extended on the outward-facing side.

I whistled, something people with mouths can do by puckering the lips and blowing. "That's real Mafia, Shamtul. Real Mafia."

Shamtul noticed something else. A thing humans call a swing set. < Hey, what's that thing over there?>

"Swingset. Kinda like a ride." I answered. "Here lemme show you." I

sat on a swing and started swinging.

< Looks fun. Hey, can I try?> Shamtul hobbled forward a few steps.

"Uhâ€|" I looked at the two seater cage swing on the end. "Yeah. Sure. I'll help ya." I hopped off the swing and opened the bar on the cage.

Shamtul stepped up, but had trouble so I lifted him up and got him into the swing. I closed the bar and started pushing the swing. I watched Shamtul's stalk eyes form into a smile. The wind ruffled his fur a little as he held on to the sides and hollered as I pushed him higher.

< It feels like flying!> He cried happily. < I could do this forever!>

"You're doing great Shamtul!" I grinned, thinking of how good it felt to see him so happy over such a simple thing. But hey, because of what he had, he couldn't do much. So what wasn't a big deal to me could mean a whole lot more to Shamtul. And I could tell he was having a blast. His eyes were gleaming.

It turns out that Shamtul was a helluva computer whizz. He could build up a virus in five minutes. In a few days he could totally come up with coded programs and all sorts of other protocols and data. And he used his brains to steal transmissions from any yeerk vessel within a light year of Earth.

"Hey Shamtul! Why not create a virus to fuck up the yeerk ships that come around here?" I asked as I sucked on a sucker called a Blow Pop.

< That would be fun. Should I scramble their systems, kill their engines or send them flying to an odd place in space?> Shamtul blinked up at me as Aesh landed next to me. Aesh had met Shamtul a few days back.

"Uhâ€|how about all of the above. Scramble their systems, send them flying and then kill the engines. Fuck them yeerks." I said.

"Hey Shadode." Aesh said as he came up next to me. "Hey Shamtul."

< Hi. OK Shadode.> Shamtul named the virus 'YeerksFucked'.

"Makin' viruses? Isn't that illegal or something?" Aesh asked.

I punched his shoulder. "Only to humans."

He smirked.

Shamtul wiggled a finger in the air, then hit the upload command. The little red bar moved across the screen until it reached one hundred percent. Then the screen flashed the words 'UPLOAD COMPLETE'.

I could almost see the looks on whatever host's faces the yeerks had as their ships were fucked up, one by one. Shamtul, Aesh and I just laughed our asses off about it.

After a few weeks, I noticed Shamtul hanging around with a female that had recently showed up. She was a real sweetheart named Amahan-Yeefit-Sheeden. And she was unique in her own way. She had a jewel in her forehead. Whether it was decoration or had some sort of power, I have no clue. Also, she only had one arm. Shamtul went on and on about how that just made her that much more beautiful.

So much for the crush on Semeir. Heh.

I sat back and watched Shamtul totally blush when Amahan stroked his cheek with her palm. He reached up and did the same thing right back.

"You go boy!" I yelled, then flipped up into the nearby tree so he couldn't poke me with a crutch.

Shamtul payed no attention to me. He was too busy making out with Amahan.

I left them alone and headed my own way. Aesh was waiting in the clearing anyway. So I jumped on his back.

"Guess who?"

Aesh flipped me over and pinned me to the ground. "Santa Claus." He answered with a smirk and kissed me.

I grabbed his rear end and kissed him back, then threw off my shirt. "Let's train. The fun way."

He snickered and kissed up and down my neck. "Sure thing."

I flipped him and pinned him to the ground while I sat topless on his stomach. With a smirk, I began to hope Shamtul was keeping busy, cuz I sure was. I leaned down and started kissing Aesh again.

Aesh and I lay there, a hopeless tangle of arms, legs and bodies. After we both 'recovered', we sparred while still ass naked. Now, there ain't nothing sexier than Aesh throwing fireballs naked! True!

OK, OK, enough of that. We finished the spar, got dressed and headed our own ways to train and practice.

Shamtul was laying down under a tree. His hind legs were shaking pretty bad. For a minute I really thought he was having a seizure.

"Yo, Shamtul. You OK?"

< Yes. It's just a spasm. Very annoying.> He answered. < It hurtsâ€|>

I sat down next to him and put my arm around his shoulders. "Think of it this way, while you're just having a leg spasm, some yeerks out there are sitting there in a fucked up ship."

Shamtul laughed. < True. That's true.>

"So is there any way to get rid of those spasms?" I asked.

< Usually they just go away. Depends.> He answered.

"Shh." I hissed when I heard faint rustling. There were Hork Bajir in the area. I could hear their distinctive breathing.

Aesh landed with a sneer, showing that he heard it too. "Shit."

< What's going on?> Shamtul asked in private thoughtspeak.

I leaned over and whispered in his ear, "Yeerk problems. Hork Bajir in the trees. Play dumb for now. We're gonna get their asses."

Aesh was already concentrating. A greenish aura appeared around him as a mysterious wind caused his cape to billow out behind him.

Shamtul took out a remote control and tapped a button. His crutches, which WERE on the ground about ten feet away, lifted up and hovered to him via small rockets. I just stared with my jaw hanging open.

He smiled. < Crutch retrieval system.>

"You're full of surprises kid!" I laughed.

Shamtul got his crutches, but I had to help him stand up. When I did, we moved away from the tree. Right as we moved, a Hork Bajir leapt down and landed where Shamtul had been.

Aesh sneered. "Come on asshole! Hey stupid over here!"

The Hork Bajir leapt at Aesh. Real smart move. For an idiot anyway. Aesh snapped his arm back and thrust it forward. A ki blast that looked like a green boomerang shot forward and cut the Hork Bajir in half.

Another Hork Bajir jumped at Shamtul. He popped the spike out of his crutch and held the crutch out sideways. The Hork Bajir impaled itself instead of hitting Shamtul.

The last known one leaped at me. But I was ready. I made a swift grab to it's neck and twisted. There was a snap, and the Hork Bajir went limp.

Shamtul sorta sank to the ground. Aesh picked him up and held him up by keeping an arm around his underbelly. Aesh moved Shamtul out of harm's way and we fought the last two Hork Bajir that were hiding out in the tree.

"Shamtul. You OK buddy?" I asked.

< My legsâ€¦.Iâ€¦I can't get up!> Shamtul started to cry as he struggled. He tried with all his might but his legs would just sink again under his weight. < I can't get upâ€¦>

Aesh stood next to me while I sat down and hugged Shamtul while he cried against my shoulder. He was shaking, scared. I felt bad for him too, and just held him while he cried.

Just then, Amahan trotted over the hill.

< Oh noâ€¦|don't let her see me like thisâ€¦|> Shamtul squirmed, trying to hide in my arms. His braces clanked together as he moved.

< Like what?> Amahan asked as she knelt down and put her arm around Shamtul.

< I can't walkâ€¦|> Shamtul whispered.

Amahan looked him in the eye and said, < Shamtul, it's alright. I won't love you less for that.>

I got up and went over to Aesh and put my head down on his shoulder as hot tears sprang from my eyes. Aesh put his arm around my waist and kissed my forehead.

"It's OKâ€¦|" He said quietly in my ear. "He's a tough kid."

The next time I saw Shamtul, he was kneeling in a sort of metal chair with treads on the bottom. OK all you X-Men fans out there: Take Professor X's chair, turn it silver, open the whole top and put treads on the bottom. That's Shamtul's chair. It's cool.

Shamtul scooted over the hill and the latest 'member' of the "Yeerk Fucker Upper" group greeted him. This guy was a strange alien that was a little dim-witted, but cool. His name was Koola. Koola loved calling Shamtul a bad ass. Koola didn't come around often, at least not that I know of. But when he did Shamtul always ended up laughing.

"Hey, show me that computer program again." Koola squatted next to Shamtul's chair and prodded the laptop.

Shamtul smiled, picked up the laptop and started clicking buttons. Koola pointed at something on the screen and Shamtul explained it. From my position I couldn't see what they were pointing at. But I shrugged it off and sat up in my tree.

I think I fell asleep in the tree. When I woke up, I saw Semeir kneeling across the meadow, hugging Shamtul. Amahan was right there, her arm around him as well.

"Yo, what's going on?" I asked as I hopped down.

< Shamtul's sick. He has a fever.> Semeir answered. I noticed she had an ice pack against Shamtul's forehead.

< It's OK. I get fevers a lotâ€¦|> Shamtul murmured as Amahan held his hand.

< But it's so high.> Amahan said.

"Relax kiddo. I'm sure you'll be alright in the mornin'. You want me to sit with ya?" I asked as I sat down.

Shamtul wrapped his arms around Amahan as Semeir let go of him. < Sureâ€¦|> He laid his head on Amahan's shoulder and closed his eyes.

< When he starts to sweat then his fever has broken.> Semeir informed

us. < Shamtulâ€|take care.>

< Thank you Semeir.> Shamtul said and managed to smile faintly.

< You're welcome.> Semeir winked one of her large main eyes. That silly little flirt. Heh, just kidding.

After Semeir got up and left, I wrapped a blanket around Shamtul and Amahan. Amahan looked up as Shamtul fell asleep against her shoulder.

< Will he die?> She asked.

"I don't know, Amahan. I wish I fucking didâ€|" I sighed and watched Shamtul sleep. "He's a great guy though."

< He's sweet. And brave to face up to this.> Amahan sighed and leaned back against the tree she was kneeling under.

"Yeah." I yawned. Another thing only people with mouths do.

In about five minutes, Amahan had fallen asleep, her head resting against Shamtul's. I'd lied to Amahan about not knowing. Yes, Shamtul would die. Muscular Dystrophy attacks the muscles. And the hearts are made of muscle.

In the morning, I heard Shamtul's chair humming so I knew he was up. I also realized that someone, probably Semeir or Amahan, had wrapped the blanket around me as I slept. I stood up and yawned, the blanket still around my shoulders.

Aesh was taking off for his morning training, and later on we were gonna do our own private 'training'. We made sure to do that daily now. Heh.

Shamtul had on another brace, I realized. One to hold his back straight. _Poor kid._ I thought.

"OK, catch THIS!" Koola threw a bright silver frisbee in Shamtul's direction.

Shamtul stretched and caught it. < Got it!> He flung it way off course and Koola went running after it.

When Koola finally got back with the damn frisbee he was too tired to throw it anymore, so he just plopped down under the tree. "Damn Shamtul! What an arm!"

< Works wonders on the females!> Shamtul laughed and flexed his muscles the best he could. That made us all laugh.

Then all of a sudden Shamtul sat really still with this weird look on his face. < Shadode,> He said privately to me, < Please put your blanket over the back half of my chair.>

I didn't say anything, but did what he was asking me to do. Shamtul sat there for another minute, then turned and tore off into the forest. Koola blinked and shrugged.

"Is he OK?"

"Hang on. I'll check." I said. I glanced down and noticed a new puddle on the ground, mostly hidden by the grass. The dirt was darker though, and I saw a faint trail leading off to where Shamtul went. I realized what happened and quickly jogged to where Shamtul was.

He was angry, clenching and unclenching his fists. Angry and embarrassed.

< Don't tell anyone! > He said as I heaved him up in a standing position and lifted him out of his soaking wet chair. < Oh no! I think I'm going on your foot! >

I felt something warm falling on my foot. "So what. I've sat in Taxxon shit before. I can live with having my foot peed on." I said as I moved my foot aside slightly.

Shamtul grimaced as the stream let up and he stopped dripping on the ground.

"C'mon let's get you cleaned up. You're soaked." I said, picking him up again and carrying him to the lake. Shamtul didn't seem to mind as I helped him get the leg and back braces off and plopped him down in the water.

Shamtul had become rather incontinent. It broke my heart to see him get so embarrassed like that. But I figured out a way to solve the problem, mostly anyway. And Shamtul liked the idea too.

Semeir morphed human and went to the store. I had her buy a whole bunch of those diapers for old people, and I stashed them in my tree. Every morning, I'd sneak Shamtul into the forest and get him out of his chair. Then I'd take one of the diapers and open it all the way up and lay it down right over the spot where his rear end and private parts went. Once Shamtul was in the chair, nobody could see the diaper. And if he went on it nobody would be able to tell.

The only other person besides myself and Shamtul that knew of the diaper thing was Amahan.

Then Jakeeli struck again.

I was taking a nap when I heard someone laughing. I opened one eye and looked at Jakeeli. He was pointing and screaming at the top of his thoughtspeak 'lungs' that there were diapers in my tree. I could see Shamtul blushing with embarrassment. But then it turned to rage.

I watched, literally as his eyes burned. That little shit Jakeeli was in for it. Shamtul sat really still and I realized what he was doing. Only I know that tell tale sign. But then the fun began.

< Shadode has diapers! Hey look! Shadode you got diapers! > Jakeeli was yelling like an idiot.

Shamtul's stalk eyes contorted in this sick, twisted smile that made me laugh. Not at Shamtul, but because Jakeeli was in for it!

Shamtul reached under his rear end and pulled out the (Newly wet) used diaper. < Hey Jakeeli! > He hollered, then scooted forward top

speed and squished the pee-soaked diaper on Jakeeli's face and rubbed it around a few times. Then he dropped the diaper and pushed Jakeeli with his chair, causing him to step on it. SMOOSH! Shamtul made Jakeeli drink his piss! That was funny(and disgusting) as hell.

Jakeeli screamed and ran into the forest. Shamtul sat there and laughed his ass off. I got up, laughing and clapping.

"Good job! GOOD job!"

He laughed more. < That was VERY satisfying.>

< What is going on here?> Semeir asked as she trotted up to join us.

Shamtul snickered. < Nothing. Just teaching Jakeeli a lesson.>

I covered my mouth and bit my lip hard.

< Why is there a diaper on the ground?> Semeir asked, turning her large main eyes from me to Shamtul and back, her stalk eyes roaming left and right behind her.

< Uhâ€¦I dropped it?> Shamtul broke into a new peal of laughter.

"Jakeeli stepped on it." I choked and coughed as I laughed.

Semeir just blinked, confused and left it at that.

A few weeks went by. Calls from Shamtul awoke me early one morning and I went over to where he was laying.

"You OK?" I asked.

< My armsâ€¦I can't moveâ€¦> Shamtul looked up at me.

"Shamtulâ€¦" I sat down and pulled him into a hug. "It's OK buddyâ€¦"

Amahan arrived and I told her what was going on. She knelt down and hugged Shamtul with her one arm, touching her cheek to his. Then she let him down and nuzzled her cheek against his hand and stroked his cheek with her palm. < I'm here Shamtul. Don't be afraid.> She hugged him and laid close to him. < I love youâ€¦>

Shamtul's fingers twitched just barely. < Amahan, I love you tooâ€¦>

I think they made love when I left, because when I came back, Amahan was in Shamtul's arms, his legs were around her and they were both asleep and wet. How they accomplished the act is beyond me.

Later on I saw Shamtul in a new brace. A whole body brace. For his arms, legs and back. I also noticed there was an opening in the collar that attached to his neck. Instantly I knew what it was for. There was a small device attached there. My guess is that if he stopped breathing for a certain amount of time it would activate and become a respirator.

Shamtul was on his last legs.

Koola still hung out with him. Amahan spent more time holding him.

< Shadode. Koola.> Shamtul asked, < What happens to you ki when you die?>

Shrugging, Koola said, "I don't wanna die and find out. I don't know. Sorryâ€|"

"Your ki probably disperses out in the universe. But it isn't your soul. Your soul goes to wherever souls go." I answered.

"I knew that!" Koola added. I made a face.

< Where do you think souls go, Shadode?> Shamtul looked at Koola. < And you, Koola. Where do you think souls go?>

"Me? Iâ€|don't know." I answered honestly.

Koola said, "Heaven? Whaddya think?"

< I bet it's like a swing, only when you swing forward you just keep going forever. Up and up.> Shamtul nodded towards the sky.

"Hey, that ain't so bad." Koola scratched his head and glanced from Shamtul to me and back.

I smiled, "Or you can just go wherever you want."

< Shamtul you goof this dying talk is depressing me.> Amahan bounded out of the forest.

Shamtul laughed. < Well it happens to all of usâ€|sometime.> He made his stalk eyes do the equivalent to a shrug.

Amahan bonked his head lightly and laughed. < Silly.> Then she hugged him. He leaned his head down on hers, hugging back the only way he could.

< I love you Amahanâ€|> Shamtul whispered.

She smiled. < I love you too Shamtul.>

I left them alone. Aesh was waiting in the clearing for me anyway. Heh, time to 'train'.

About a week later, Shamtul woke up early. I saw his eyes open when I woke up. Lately, I've started sleeping next to Shamtul at night. That way if he wakes up or something, I'd be there to take care of him if he needed anything.

"Hey, Shamtul. How ya doin'?" I rolled over to face him.

< Havingâ€|trouble breathingâ€|> Shamtul answered shakily, his thoughtspeak voice frightened. I saw his eyes dart from side to side. < Just in caseâ€|Shadode. Open the back panel on my chair. There's a respirator tube there. If Iâ€|stop breathingâ€|hook me up.>

I bit my lip and reached for the back of his chair, opened the panel and retrieved the ribbed, clear tubing. Human respirator tubes are pretty big, but an Andalite respirator is only about two times as fat as a fat pencil, if you know what I mean. Erâ€¦forget it. Let's just say that our tubes are smaller than humans'.

"Is this it?"

< Yeahâ€¦Thanks.> He murmured.

I put my arms around him and held him. "You've got the most guts I ever seen, Shamtul. I think that if anyone's a warrior around here it's you. You've fought the damn Muscular Dystrophy with all you've got."

Shamtul smiled faintly with half closed eyes. < I'm more scared then you thinkâ€¦>

"You're good at hiding it. But I'm scared too kiddo." I said, hugging him and letting him lean against me. "I love you like a little brother, Shamtul. I never had a brother or a sister."

< I never had any sisters or brothers either. But I feel like I do with you around.> He closed his eyes and rested against me. Then his chest jerked.

"Shamtul?" I looked down at him.

Shamtul gasped a few times, then his eyes almost bulged out as he lost his ability to breathe totally. A red light blinked on the little device on his throat and forced him to breathe. I picked up his tube, removed the device and hooked up the respirator. He panicked for a few more minutes until his body adjusted to the vent.

< I won't give upâ€¦> he whispered as he fell back to sleep in my arms, the respirator breathing for him.

As soon as Shamtul was deep asleep, I bit my lip as tears began flowing down my cheeks. I didn't bother to fight them, and I cried for my friend. I cried as he slept in my arms. I cried for the innocence that was being stolen away by death.

After a time, I laid Shamtul down and covered him up again. Then I picked up my sketchbook and started to draw him. But I didn't draw Shamtul with braces and tubes and hoverchairs. No crutches either. It was just Shamtul, standing there with normal, strong legs, his tail high. I smiled when I finished and put the drawing away for later.

< Shamtul? Shamtul are you OK?> Amahan galloped into the area. She stopped when she saw Shamtul in his wheelchair with the respirator tube in his throat. < Shamtulâ€¦>

"He's a bad ass." Koola said, "Right Shamtul?"

< Right. Hi Amahan, love.> Shamtul scooted to Amahan. She put her arm around him and hugged him.

< How are you?>

< Alive.> He said and smiled.

"Ahhhh he's a tough kid." I said, adding to the conversation. "There ain't shit that can keep him down."

"Exactly. He's king bad ass." Koola laughed

< No, he's a sweet, handsome and kind young Andalite.> Amahan stroked Shamtul's cheek, making him blush.

< That kicks butt.> Shamtul added and we all laughed.

"Yeah, bad ass, butt-kicker handsome Andalite." I giggled, making Amahan blush.

A little later on, I noticed Shamtul falling asleep in his chair. So I went over to him. "Hey, kiddo. How're you feeling?"

< Tiredâ€|> He scooted forward towards me. < I want to lay down.>

"OK. Hold on," I held up one finger in a 'one sec' signal and brought a mattress out into the meadow by my tree. I flopped all of Shamtul's blankets onto it. Then I unbuckled Shamtul from his hoverchair and laid him down. "There you go. Lemme get those annoying braces off."

< Shadode.> Shamtul started.

"Yeah?"

< Thanksâ€|> He finished.

"No problem, Shamtul." I smiled as I unbuckled his braces and slide them off his body. I could feel the knots in his muscles, all hard as a rock. "Geez. Knot factory." I said, and started massaging his muscles. I massaged his arms and legs, his back, shoulders and tail.

He winced and groaned a lot, because of the soreness and cramps the knots caused. But when the knots were out, Shamtul looked very relieved. < That felt goodâ€|stupid cramps.>

"Hey, anything ya need, just ask. You're the boss." I said and patted his back.

Koola sat down by Shamtul. But I pulled him and Amahan aside. "Listen guysâ€|Shamtul's fighting like hellâ€|.but he's dying. It's only a matter of time before his hearts fail."

"Aw man no! He's too cool!" Koola stomped angrily, then punched a tree, causing it to explode.

Amahan hung her head. < Shamtulâ€|No he can't dieâ€|he's fought so hardâ€|so bravelyâ€|>

"I hate it too. Butâ€|.you have to give him permission to go. Let him know it's OK toâ€|." I paused and bit my lip to keep it from trembling, "you gotta let give him permission to die. Shamtul's sufferingâ€|" Tears spilled out of my eyes.

"No!" Koola wiped his eyes. "There has to be a mistake!"

< No. She's right.> Amahan interrupted, her thoughtspeak shaking. Then she started to cry. < We have to let go.>

Koola looked down and kicked the grass.

I didn't know what else to say. Then another of my friends appeared. I didn't know him very well, but he was really polite. A guy named Mondo.

Mondo looked over at Shamtul. "A child of God preparing to return to his Heavenly Father?"

"Yeahâ€|" I said a bit sadly.

Shamtul was asleep at the moment, dreaming his warrior dreams. At least the disease couldn't take those away from him.

I watched Amahan go and kneel by his sleeping form. She stroked his head. < You are a brave warrior. You fought well. Rest now, Shamtul. Just rest and let it goâ€|don't be afraid to let go. I love you. I love you a lot.> She lowered her forehead and touched his.

Shamtul woke up and looked at her. < Amahanâ€|I love you tooâ€|please do something for me?>

Koola sat down at the foot of Shamtul's bed while Mondo patted my shoulder and looked on.

< What?> Amahan asked.

< See that meadow? Go run there, run in the grass. Run for me. Just run free.> Shamtul tried to smile with stalk eyes that wouldn't move anymore.

I realized what he was doing. He wanted Amahan to do what he would have loved to do, to watch her run free. He also did it to keep her from watching him die.

Amahan stroked his cheek with her palm and held him with her one arm. < I love you always.>

Shamtul looked at her. I could tell that he so badly wanted to stroke her cheek in return. But she took his hand and nuzzled her cheek against it. < I'll always love you Amahan. Always.>

With that, Amahan stood and walked into the meadow. When she got there, she began to run. Mondo knelt down and put his hands together, mumbling quietly. I didn't know what he was doing at first, but then I figured it out. He was praying. Something humans do to talk to their God.

I sat down and picked up my sketchbook. The picture. I could show it to Shamtul now. Make him happy. When I stood up I saw Koola talking to Shamtul.

"You'll be a bad ass always, Shamtul. You're also my best friend."

< And you'll always be cool, Koola. Bad ass Koola.> Shamtul said, trying to smile.

Koola showed a sad smile, then got up and stood not too far away. I walked over and sat down in front of Shamtul. "Hey kiddo. I got something for ya." I said.

< Oh?> Shamtul said, as Mondo finished his prayer.

"Yeah. Here." I unfolded the drawing and showed it to him.

< It'sâ€¦meâ€¦> He blinked. < It's what I really amâ€¦>

"It's your soul." I said, "This is what you are on the inside."

Amahan ran past, dashing towards the far end of the meadow.

< It's greatâ€¦> Shamtul whispered. His eyes were getting dim. I checked his pulse, then touched his chest to feel his hearts, and bit my lip when I did. One of his hearts had stopped working. The other one was already beating irregularly.

"You're getting full of knots again." I said, and massaged his muscles back to relaxation again. For a while, it was silent, and Amahan continued to run towards the far end of the field. Mondo meditated nearby and Koola paced around, occasionally kicking the tree he was passing. The only real sound was of the click-hiss-click of Shamtul's respirator. Every time it hissed, his chest would rise and fall as air was forced into his lungs.

Shamtul seemed to be asleep, then his eyes flew open. < The meadowâ€¦it's glowingâ€¦everything's glowingâ€¦>

This was it.

< I'm scaredâ€¦Shadodeâ€¦> Shamtul shivered all over. I laid down behind him and held him.

"Don't be scared, Shamtul." I said quietly into his ear. "Just get out of your body. Just leave it. You don't need it anymore. And when you get out, just run. Don't stop for shit, you hear me? You just run like hell and don't look back. And don't stop till you get to where you gotta goâ€¦" I totally started to cry. I sobbed and hugged him, kissing him by his ear the way I would a little brother. Then I took his hand and kissed it.

< The swingsâ€¦remember themâ€¦?> Shamtul murmured.

"Yeah, I do. You had a blast." I hugged him a little tighter.

< I'm swinging nowâ€¦any second I'm going to jump offâ€¦.>

"Whenever your readyâ€¦just let go. You'll fly, kiddo. You'll fly."

Mondo knelt down next to me. "She's right, child. You will fly farther than anyone else can."

Amahan ran past again, running gracefully as her muscles rippled under her purple fur, which shined in the sunlight. Shamtul watched her for a moment, silently.

< I think I'd like to sleep now.>

Mondo gently patted Shamtul's shoulder. "Good night, little one."

Koola stood at the foot of Shamtul's bed, sobbing and sniffing. Amahan ran past once again, and I could hear her crying, whispering to Shamtul one more time that she loved him. I was crying too as I held him.

"Shoot for the moon" Koola said quietly as he sniffed.

"Sleep now. Rest. When you wake up, you'll be in a better place." I clutched his hand in one of mine as I hugged him from behind.

I watched all four of Shamtul's eyes flutter a little. < Shadode> He whispered. I think it was private thoughtspeak, because nobody else reacted. < Here I go> Shamtul fell silent after that, his thoughtspeak trailing off.

"I love you kid." I sobbed, hiding my face in his fur and holding him close to me. He made a little noise in thoughtspeak that made me look at him again. When I did, I watched Shamtul close his eyes; I knew that he wouldn't open them again. I bit my lip and put my head down on his chest, and literally heard the last beat of his remaining heart.

A breeze ruffled the grass in the meadow.

Shamtul died quietly, without pain, without real fear, and without distress. My ability to sense power levels and ki energy let me feel his little bit of ki(all living things have it) disperse everywhere, like a shockwave. But I also envisioned something else. I envisioned Shamtul running out into the meadow, joining Amahan and just running forever. Never getting tired again.

I broke down totally as I took the tube out of Shamtul's throat. I sobbed like a little baby while Mondo squeezed my shoulder gently. Koola knelt down and buried his face in his hands. Amahan stopped running and bowed her head. She knew. Shamtul had passed her on his way to wherever he was going.

"I'm gonna miss you, you bad ass kid." Koola sobbed as Mondo laid a hand on his shoulder in comfort.

Semeir arrived. < I felt a breeze and> She seemed to just know, and knelt down slowly beside him. Shamtul and Semeir weren't especially close, but Semeir takes losses pretty hard.

Semeir stroked Shamtul's head gently, leaned down and touched her forehead to his. < Goodbye, Shamtul, brave warrior. You fought a brave battle> With that, she stood up and let out a series of soft sobs. Mondo went over and hugged her gently. I held Shamtul a little longer, kissed his forehead and then laid him down to rest. He looked

so peaceful.

I wandered into the meadow quietly and just stared at the ground. I came across a hoofprint that could only be Shamtul's. But he hadn't run in the meadow, had he? Maybe he didâ€¦

Everyone was gathered around the grave on the hill. Amahan was crying. So were the rest of us. We'd said our goodbyes and were now just standing there and paying respect. Then we dispersed. All except for Amahan.

I watched her rip the gemstone out of her forehead and lay it on Shamtul's grave. < Always.> She said, then she touched her fingers to the blood and drew an arch on the gravestone with it. Amazingly, another gem grew back on her forehead, only this time it was another color.

Always.

My eyes were drawn to the swingset. I could still see Shamtul's face, how happy he was as he swung. Sighing, I plopped down on a swing and started to swing.

The chains creaked in protest to my weight as I swung higher and higher, tears stinging my eyes. I stopped kicking my legs and let myself stop swinging. Gradually the breeze against my face died down until my feet hit the ground again. I heard faint creaking and squeaking. The sound reminded me of Shamtul's leg braces. But Shamtul wasn't there.

Then I noticed something, and slowly turned my head to the right. What I saw made me break into a smile.

The empty two-seater cage was swaying gently in the breeze.

~*_Come back again. I want you to stay next time. Cuz sometimes the world ain't kind when people get lost like you and me. I just made a friend. A friend is someone you need. But now that he had to go away, I still feel the words that he might say. Turn on your heartlight! Let it shine wherever you go. Let it make a happy glow for all the world to see. Turn on your heartlight in the middle of a young boy's dream. Don't wake me up too soon. Gonna take a ride across the moon, you and me.._*~

End
file.